

Brebner Flat

Recreation Report

Prepared by:
Christine Plourde
Recreation Staff Officer

for:
St. Joe Ranger District
Idaho Panhandle National Forests

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Introduction

This analysis addresses recreation motorized access and dispersed recreation opportunities. All activities described in for Alternative B, the proposed action, are addressed in this analysis. Recreation access and opportunities are not part of the purpose and need for this project. Hunting quality, an issue identified through public scoping, is indirectly addressed in this analysis by describing the effects of the proposed action to access opportunities. See the Wildlife section for effects to big game habitat.

This analysis also addresses the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, for the proposed water resource actions in Siwash Creek, a tributary of the St. Joe Wild & Scenic River.

Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policy

Regulatory Framework

Land and Resource Management Plan

The Idaho Panhandle National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) provides standards and guidelines for Access & Recreation in General Forest (MA6) and Wild & Scenic River (MA 2a) Management Areas. Refer to Appendix A for findings on consistency with Desired Conditions, Standards and Guidelines.

Federal Law

- *Wild & Scenic Rivers Act as of October 2, 1968 (P.L. 90-542, 82 Stat. 906, as amended):*

The proposed action includes removal of fifteen culverts, as water resource projects, within Siwash Creek, a tributary of the St. Joe Wild & Scenic River corridor.

Other Guidance or Recommendations

Currently a challenge cost share agreement exists between the USDA Forest Service, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation and the Shoshone and Benewah county groomer boards. This agreement allows the counties to groom and maintain the identified snowmobile routes for winter snowmobile use.

Topics and Issues Addressed in This Analysis

Purpose and Need

Recreation & Access is not driving the Purpose and Need for this project.

Issues

Access has been identified through scoping as an issue; specifically around opportunities to hunt within the project area. Routes open to motorized recreation, groomed over-snow motorized recreation and dispersed camping are existing Access & Recreation activities.

Resource Indicators and Measures

The resource indicators and measures (FSH 1909.15, 12.5) used in the analyses of the recreational resource are as follows:

Table 1. Resource indicators and measures for assessing effects

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure (Quantify if possible)	Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
Dispersed Recreation Opportunities	Year round outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences available	Acres open to ROS management prescription	No	Forest Plan Desired Condition FW-DC-AR-04
Routes Available for Motorized Recreation Opportunities	Safe motorized recreation opportunities available	Miles	No	Forest Plan Desired Condition FW-DC-AR-07
Routes Available for Motorized Recreation Opportunities (Over-snow)	Safe motorized recreation opportunities available	Miles Groomed	No	Forest Plan Desired Condition FW-DC-AR-07

Methodology

Dispersed recreation opportunities were identified by site visits. Routes available to motorized recreation were identified based on the current Motor Vehicle Use Map (2018), existing agreements and by site visits.

Information Sources

GIS data from the Idaho Panhandle National Forests was used in determining the recreational resources that may be affected by the proposed action. Miles of motorized routes, acres of ROS, and locations of developed recreation sites were also determined through GIS data. Existing resource conditions were determined through on-the-ground surveys completed by IPNF Recreation Staff. Information regarding annual trail maintenance accomplishments are based on discussions with the IPNF Recreation Program Manager.

Incomplete and Unavailable Information

No incomplete and/or unavailable information was found to exist during analysis.

Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis

Direct/Indirect Effects Boundaries

Dispersed Recreation and Summer Motorized Routes. The spatial boundaries for analyzing the direct and indirect effects to dispersed recreation is the National Forest System lands within the Elk Management Unit. The EMU is 63,705 acres, 35,190 acres of which are National Forest System lands. This geographic area has similar landscape qualities for recreational activities (topography, vegetative coverage, aspect etc.) of similar access attributes (distance from communities, highway 50 and industrial logging traffic presence). The temporal boundaries for analyzing the direct and indirect effects are five years, because it is anticipated that harvest activities would occur over a five year period.

Over-Snow Motorized Routes. The spatial boundaries for analyzing the direct and indirect effects to motorized over-snow recreation routes is the area identified in Figure 3. Brebner Groomed Snow Routes, because the Kelly Creek groomed route provides access to a greater network of groomed over-snow

routes in the Fishhook Creek and Little North Fork of the Clearwater River area. The temporal boundaries for analyzing the direct and indirect effects are five years, because it is anticipated that harvest activities would occur over a five year period.

Cumulative Effects Boundaries

Spatial and temporal boundaries set the limits for selecting the actions most likely to contribute to cumulative effects (FSH 1909.15, 15.2). The spatial and temporal boundaries are the same as those described for the direct/indirect above.

Affected Environment

Existing Condition

The existing conditions of the recreational resources found within the project area are described and measured based upon the resource indicators listed in the following table. These indicators have historically been the recreational opportunities planned and developed by the USDA Forest Service.

Table 2. Resource indicators and measures for the existing condition

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition	
Routes Available for Motorized Recreation Opportunities	Safe motorized recreation opportunities available	Miles	Year Long	53.24
			Seasonal Restriction	3.8
			Total	57.04
Routes Available for Motorized Recreation Opportunities (over-snow)	Groomed over-snow motorized recreation opportunities available	Miles	91	
Dispersed Recreation Opportunities	Year round outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences available	Acres	Rural	126
			Roaded Natural	9209
			Semi Primitive Motorized	4025
			Semi Primitive Non-Motorized	21829
			Total	35189

Miles of Routes Available for Motorized Recreation Opportunities

Miles of routes available for motorized recreation is based on the current Motor Vehicle Use Map GIS data. Miles of motorized recreation opportunities is defined by motorized trails (routes open to vehicles < 50" wide) managed by the Forest Service in the analysis area. Maintenance and brushing on these routes is limited. Access to Route 1956E is currently brushed in at its junction with cost-share road 1956A which accesses private timber lands around Fuzzy Peak. There is no evidence of motorized use of this route within the last few years. See Figure 1. Photo of entrance to 1956E at junction with 1956A.



Figure 1. Entrance to 1956E (open to highway legal vehicles) at junction with 1956A, August 2018.

Miles of Routes Available for Over-Snow Motorized Recreation Opportunities

Miles of routes available for over-snow motorized travel is based on current approved routes for grooming by the counties and Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. Fishhook and Kelly creeks are the primary access routes from Avery, ID for the Roundtop snow hut and surrounding groomed routes. Winter plowing of designated groomed snow routes for timber harvest activities does occur. Fishhook creek provides access to private timber lands and has been plowed in recent years (2018, 2017). Kelly creek also provides access to private timber lands and may be plowed for access as well.

Acres of Dispersed Recreation Opportunities

The primary dispersed recreational activities in the analysis area are camping, hunting and OHV riding. Dispersed recreation opportunities are characterized by different settings in the inventoried Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. These settings were established during the 2015 Revision of Land Management Plan for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. Distant sight and/or sound of human activity and more than 1/2 hr. walk from any motorized travel is normal for Semi Primitive Non-motorized (SPNM). Several administratively used roads exist within the analysis area however use is very rare. 0.67 miles of OHV routes exist within the SPNM setting which is incompatible with the access and remoteness characteristics. Opportunities for Rural, Roaded-Natural and Semi-Primitive Motorized dispersed recreation are in good condition within the analysis area.

Environmental Consequences

Alternative A – No Action

No action would not result in change to existing opportunities for motorized access or dispersed recreation. Mileage for motorized routes would be unchanged. Clearing of motorized routes would continue to be limited in the analysis area. Plowing of groomed routes will continue to occur for timber harvest activities. Acres of dispersed recreation opportunities would persist.

Alternative B – Proposed Action

Project Design Features and Mitigation Measures

The following design features have been incorporated into the proposed action to minimize effects to motorized recreation and dispersed recreation opportunities

1. Existing dispersed camp sites impacted by harvest activities or road modifications should be restored or reconfigured to provide a similar space for dispersed camping. See Figure 2. Brebner Dispersed Recreation Opportunities.
2. Plowing of groomed routes should only occur before December 15 or after March 15 to allow for grooming of motorized snow routes. Should plowing be necessary between December 15 and March 15 an area should be plowed to provide for parking at the end of the plowed route. See Figure 3. Brebner Groomed Snow Routes.

Direct and Indirect Effects - Alternative B

Miles of Routes Available for Motorized Recreation Opportunities

Proposed action activities will have direct temporary impacts to 4.08 miles of off highway vehicle (OHV, <50" wide) while harvest operations occur within the project area, approximately five years. The 4.08 miles of OHV routes within the project area will be utilized for harvest activities and will be cleared. The addition of 1.07 miles of seasonal restriction to OHV routes will have negligible effects to overall access within the analysis area (-1% of year around OHV access). 52.17 miles of OHV routes would continue to be open year around within the analysis area. Forest Wide Objectives (FW-OBJ-AR-05) of providing maintenance on 150 to 300 miles of summer trails will continue to be met. Forest Wide Objectives for loop opportunity development will not be effected by the seasonal restriction as 1956E is not part of a loop route. Motorized recreation opportunities for recreational riding and access to dispersed camping and hunting will continue to exist with negligible restrictions.

Miles of Routes Available for Over-Snow Motorized Recreation Opportunities

The proposed action may result in plowing of Kelly Creek between December 15 and March 15 during the 5 year operational window. Should plowing occur it will result in approximately 8 miles of designated groomed routes being plowed. Because this is a primary access route from a plowed highway, 91 miles of groomed route may be temporarily inaccessible by alternative B. Plowing may occur on this route by private timber companies as it is a cost-share road. This is acknowledged in the existing county and Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation agreement. Probability of plowing Kelly Creek will be higher during this time frame, however Forest Wide Objectives of (FW-OBJ-AR-04) of providing 200-300 miles of groomed routes will be met in other areas across the Forest. Snowmobile/ snow bike access to groomed routes from Avery, ID will be reduced however other routes exist (North Fork St. Joe River) and recreationists will be able to park at the end of the plowed route.

Acres of Dispersed Recreation Opportunities

Proposed temporary and long term changes to access would not result in a change to recreation opportunity settings. Use of administrative routes and existing 0.67 miles of OHV routes within Semi Primitive Non-Motorized setting would remain. Seasonal restrictions to route 1956E would not result in change in recreation opportunity setting. Dispersed recreation activities within the project area will be displaced during timber harvest operations for intermittently for approximately five years however, other opportunities exist in the surrounding area. The proposed action would result in short term displacement and no change in long term for dispersed recreation opportunities.

Table 3. Resource indicators and measures for alternative B direct/indirect effects

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure		Existing Condition	Alt. B	Change	Magnitude of Change
Routes Available for Motorized Recreation Opportunities	Safe motorized recreation opportunities available	Miles	Year Long	53.24	52.17	-1.07	-2%
			Seasonal Restriction	3.8	4.87	+1.07	+28%
			Total	57.04	57.04	0	0
Routes Available for Motorized Recreation Opportunities (over-snow)	Groomed over-snow motorized recreation opportunities available	Miles		91	91	0	0
Dispersed Recreation Opportunities	Year round outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences available	Acres	Rural	126	126	0	0
			Roaded Natural	9209	9209	0	0
			Semi Primitive Motorized	4025	4025	0	0
			Semi Primitive Non-Motorized	21829	21829	0	0

Cumulative Effects – Alternative B

Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis

Miles of Routes Available for Motorized Recreation Opportunities

The proposed action (alternative B) would result in negligible restrictions to OHV access in the short term and long term with -1% change in year around OHV routes in the Elk Management Unit. Timber harvest activities (hauling, harvesting and planting of trees) is anticipated to continue to occur within the analysis area during the five years of operational short term impacts from the proposed action. These ongoing and reasonably foreseeable actions combined with the negligible change would not result in an inability to meet forest wide objectives for motorized access. Short term displacement may result in increased use in adjacent areas.

Miles of Routes Available for Over-Snow Motorized Recreation Opportunities

The proposed action (alternative B) would result in no measurable direct or indirect long term effects to over-snow motorized recreation opportunities; therefore no long term cumulative effects would result. Short term impacts from plowing combined with ongoing plowing activities may result in reduced groomed route access to 91 miles and Round top Snow hut. Forest Wide Objective (FW-OBJ-AR-04), to provide 200-300 miles of groomed routes, would continue to be exceeded across the IPNF.

Acres of Dispersed Recreation Opportunities

The proposed action (alternative B) would result in no measurable direct or indirect long term effects to dispersed recreation opportunities; therefore no cumulative effects would result. Short term displacement of dispersed recreation opportunities will occur. This combined with reasonably foreseeable future actions of ongoing forest management would not result in a loss of recreational opportunity which could not be found in adjacent areas to the analysis area.

Summary

Table 4. Summary of Effects

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure		Existing Condition	Alt. A Magnitude of Change	Alt. B Magnitude of Change
Routes Available for Motorized Recreation Opportunities	Safe motorized recreation opportunities available	Miles	Year Long	53.24	0	-2%
			Seasonal Restriction	3.8	0	+28%
			Total	57.04	0	0
Routes Available for Motorized Recreation Opportunities (over-snow)	Groomed over-snow motorized recreation opportunities available	Miles		91	0	0
Dispersed Recreation Opportunities	Year round outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences available	Acres	Rural	126	0	0
			Roaded Natural	9209	0	0
			Semi Primitive Motorized	4025	0	0
			Semi Primitive Non-Motorized	21829	0	0

Compliance with LMP and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

The project is consistent with LMP objectives, standards and guidelines for Access and Recreation. See Appendix A: Brebner Flat, Land Management Plan Recreation and Access Findings.

A section 7(a) analysis was completed for 15 culvert replacements, water resource actions, within Siwash creek, tributary to the St. Joe Wild & Scenic River, and the project was found to not diminish recreation, scenic, fish or wildlife values. See Appendix B: Brebner Wild & Scenic Rivers Section 7(a) Evaluation.

References Cited

USDA Forest Service. 2015 Revised. Idaho Panhandle National Forests Land Management Plan. Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

USDA Forest Service. Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Guidebook.

Appendix A: Land Management Plan Findings for Access and Recreation

Appendix B: Section 7(a) Evaluation for the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act

Appendix C: Forest Wide Trail Accomplishments